United Nations A/56/PV.24

General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

24th plenary meeting
Friday, 12 October 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sharma (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Statements on the occasion of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations and its Secretary-General

The Acting President: Today is a momentous day. We are all thrilled that our Organization and the Secretary-General have been awarded the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

I now have the honour to read a message from the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Han Seung-soo, who is currently in Seoul, Korea. His message is addressed to the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the occasion of the Nobel Committee's announcement that the Nobel Peace Prize will be awarded to the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It reads:

> "It is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt congratulations, on behalf of the whole United Nations membership, to our Organization, the United Nations, and its Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, on their winning of the Nobel Peace Prize this year. This is a well-deserved honour for all the Member States of the United Nations as well as for the entire staff of the Secretariat.
>
> "As members of the United Nations family, we all feel proud that during the last half century the United Nations has always been at the forefront of efforts to achieve peace and security as well as the prosperity and development of mankind. This prize is a recognition of not only the achievements of the United Nations in serving the world community, but also of that of the thousands of United Nations staff members led by the Secretary-General who work with such dedication and often in perilous circumstances to make this world a better and safer place. At the same time, I believe this award will serve to encourage all of us to make further efforts to accomplish our mandates for humanity.
>
> "This Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan is most fitting, as we are facing formidable challenges such as poverty, terrorism, drug abuse, environmental degradation and HIV/AIDS.
>
> "My special and warmest congratulations go to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in particular. I truly believe that all of us in the United Nations owe him a large debt of gratitude for his outstanding leadership and services at this critical time in history, of which the Nobel Peace Prize is a most fitting and timely recognition.
>
> "Finally, I sincerely hope that the international community will view this award not just as recognition of past achievement but, more importantly, as a beacon illuminating the way

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

01-57703 (E)

forward for the United Nations as it rises to confront new challenges."

Before I invite the Secretary-General to take the floor, may I also add my own voice. I am thrilled that you, Mr. Secretary-General, and our Organization, which you lead, have been awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. It is a recognition of your personal dedication and contribution to promoting peace, development, justice and human rights, often in trying circumstances, and of the United Nations ability to rise to the challenges, old and new, to make the world a better place to live in for every man and woman around the world. Please accept, Mr. Secretary-General, my hearty congratulations on this momentous occasion of recognition so fittingly awarded to you and to the United Nations under your leadership.

I now invite the Secretary-General to say a few words.

The Secretary-General: The decision of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee is truly an honour for the whole of the United Nations, which means of course all of its Member States and this Assembly, which represents them. It is also an honour for all parts of the Organization and, above all, for its dedicated staff around the world. They work hard every day to make the world a more just, a more peaceful and a happier place. Many of them risk their lives, and they richly deserve this award.

A year ago, your heads of State and Government reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit the indispensable role of the United Nations as a common house of the entire human family. Now the Nobel Committee has used this prize, in its own words,

> "to proclaim that the only negotiable route to global peace and cooperation goes by way of the United Nations".

In a world that is growing ever closer and more interconnected, and yet is still torn by brutal conflicts and cruel injustice, it is more important than ever that humanity travel that route and that all of us work hard to pave the road ahead of it.

All of us who work at the United Nations should feel proud today, but also humble, because even more will be expected of us in the future. This award is a tribute, above all, to our colleagues who have made the supreme sacrifice in the service of humanity. The only true prize for them and for us will be peace itself.

The Acting President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to say a few words on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am indeed overwhelmed to be standing here on this momentous day to express, on behalf of my brothers in the Group of African States, our sincere congratulations to our Organization and to a distinguished son of Africa — and, indeed, of the world — Mr. Kofi Annan.

The decision on this award has come at a very opportune time, when the United Nations is facing considerable challenges. This distinguished son of Africa and of the world, Mr. Kofi Annan, assumed the leadership of our Organization at a time when the ship was sailing through rough seas. We have witnessed his competence, his perspicacity and his wisdom in steering this ship during these critical times, which are becoming even more critical and more challenging. Therefore, we find that the selection of the United Nations and the Secretary-General for this prize represents a great moral support for and recognition of each and every one of us in our pursuit of the right path and the right choices.

Mr. Secretary-General, we congratulate ourselves and we congratulate you. In conclusion, I would say that the prize itself is honoured by dint of its having been given to you, because, as you said, though we feel proud we also feel humble. We have known you to be a humble person, and we pray to God Almighty to help you in your future tasks.

The Acting President: I now invite the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to make a statement on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. De Saram (Sri Lanka): Today is for all of us a most moving and profound occasion. On behalf of all the members of the Asian Group, I have the great honour to convey to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, of whom we are all so deeply proud, and to the United Nations and its Member States, the most profound congratulations on this unique honour that has today been bestowed on all of us. It is indeed full of hope, full of encouragement and full of promise for the long years ahead when we shall all need to come together and work together towards peace.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Georgia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Volski (Georgia): Mr. Secretary-General, I present the congratulations of the Group of Eastern European States. This is an honour, a great pleasure and an even greater responsibility at this moment when the world is praising the United Nations and your personal input in bringing peace and relief to those who are suffering.

The Nobel Prize should encourage all of us to serve the United Nations ideals better than ever and with stronger commitment. Congratulations again.

The Acting President: I call now on the Permanent Representative of Haiti, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti) *(spoke in French)*: Mr. Secretary-General, it is with particular emotion that, on behalf of the member countries of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I express to you our congratulations on the rare honour that has been bestowed on you this morning — you and our Organization as well.

I cannot fail to express our collective view that, as of today, the history of the world could not be written without constant references to the history of the United Nations and the part that you have played in making this Organization an instrument for peace and development.

Once again, may I express to you our congratulations.

The Acting President: I call now on the representative of Ireland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Gardner (Ireland): It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, to extend our congratulations to the United Nations and to the Secretary-General on winning the Nobel Prize for Peace. The prize is a clear reflection of the esteem in which the United Nations and the Secretary-General are held. It is also a tribute to the work of the Organization, which always faces a range of formidable tasks. The prize should encourage all of us to continue our efforts.

The Acting President: I call now on the representative of the United States of America as host country.

Ms. Marcus (United States of America): I am most grateful for the opportunity to address the General Assembly for the first time on this historic day. On behalf of the host nation, I want to express heartiest congratulations on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the United Nations. That award is richly deserved for the efficacious role the United Nations has played in the maintenance of international peace and security for more than 50 years.

The events of the past month made that indispensable contribution abundantly clear. I want to tell the Secretary-General, on behalf of the people of the United States, how very grateful we are, and how deeply we have been touched by his words and his deeds in these extraordinary times.

We share in the joy of this House today, and especially want to recognize the Secretary-General's unique and invaluable leadership. He has made us deeply, deeply proud.

Agenda item 15 *(continued)*

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(c) Election of a member of the International Court of Justice

Memorandum by the Secretary-General (A/56/372)

List of nominations (A/56/373 and Add.1)

Curriculum vitae (A/56/374 and Corr.1 and 2)

The President: The General Assembly will proceed to the election of a member of the International Court of Justice for the unexpired term of office of Judge and former President Mohammed Bedjaoui, whose resignation took effect on 30 September 2001.

In connection with this election, I should like to bring the following matters to the attention of the members of the General Assembly.

First, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 264 (III) of 8 October 1948, a State which is a party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, but not a Member of the United Nations, shall participate in the General Assembly in electing the

members of the Court in the same manner as the States Members of the United Nations. Therefore, on this occasion, the representative of Switzerland may participate in the election.

Secondly, I should like to confirm that, at this time, the Security Council, independently of the General Assembly, is also proceeding to elect one member of the Court. This procedure is in accordance with article 8 of the Statute of the Court, which provides that

> "The General Assembly and the Security Council shall proceed independently of one another to elect the members of the Court."

Accordingly, the results of the voting in the General Assembly will not be communicated to the Security Council until one candidate has obtained the required majority in the Assembly.

Thirdly, I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the documents relating to the election. The Assembly has before it document A/56/372, which contains a memorandum by the Secretary-General on the present composition of the Court and on the procedure to be followed in the General Assembly and in the Security Council with regard to the election; and documents A/56/373, which contains the list of nominations of candidates by national groups within the required time for submission, that is, by 12 September 2001, and A/56/373/Add.1, which informs of the withdrawal of one candidate. With reference to the list of nominations of candidates by national groups contained in document A/56/373, I would like to inform the Assembly that, subsequently, the Secretariat was informed that the Italian national group nominated Mr. Nabil Elaraby as a candidate.

The Assembly also has before it documents A/56/374, A/56/374/Corr.1 in Arabic only, and A/56/374/Corr.2, which contain the curricula vitae of the candidates nominated by national groups.

In accordance with article 10, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Court, the candidate who obtains an absolute majority of votes in both the General Assembly and in the Security Council shall be considered elected.

The consistent practice of the United Nations has been to interpret the words "absolute majority" as meaning a majority of all electors, whether or not they vote or are allowed to vote. The electors in the General Assembly are all 189 Member States, plus the one non-Member State which is a party to the Statute of the Court, namely Switzerland, for a total of 190 electors. Accordingly, for the present election, 96 votes constitute an absolute majority in the General Assembly.

The General Assembly will now proceed to a secret ballot. If in the first ballot no candidate obtains an absolute majority, it will be necessary to proceed to other ballots until a candidate has obtained the required majority. Pursuant to the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 915th meeting, on 16 November 1960, these ballots shall be unrestricted.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to the procedures I have just outlined?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to remind representatives that, pursuant to rule 88 of the Assembly's rules of procedure,

> "After the President has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting."

We shall now begin the voting process. Ballot papers will now be distributed.

Representatives are requested to use only the ballot papers that are now being distributed, and to place a cross to the left of the name of the candidate for whom they wish to vote. Votes may be cast only for the candidate whose name appears on the ballot papers.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bijou (Costa Rica), Ms. Vassallo (Malta), Ms. Prokop (Poland) and Ms. Lim (Singapore) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Number of ballot papers:	174
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	174
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	174
Required absolute majority:	96
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Nabil Elaraby (Egypt)	124
Mr. Francis Romain Wodie (Côte d'Ivoire)	50

Mr. Nabil Elaraby has obtained an absolute majority in the General Assembly.

I have communicated the result of the voting to the President of the Security Council.

I have received from the President of the Security Council the following letter:

> "I have the honour to inform you that at the 4389th meeting of the Security Council, held on 12 October 2001 for the purpose of electing a member of the International Court of Justice for a term of office to expire on 5 February 2006, Mr. Nabil Elaraby obtained an absolute majority of votes."

As a result of the independent voting in the Security Council and in the General Assembly, Mr. Nabil Elaraby has obtained an absolute majority in both organs. He is therefore duly elected a member of the International Court of Justice, to serve for a term of office commencing today, 12 October 2001, and ending on 5 February 2006. I take this opportunity to extend to him the congratulations of the Assembly on his election and to thank the tellers for their assistance.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 15.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to inform members of the following additions to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

On Monday, 15 October 2001, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up, as the first item, agenda item 7, "Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations".

On Monday, 22 October 2001, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up, as the third item, agenda item 17 (h), "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments: appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences".

On Thursday, 1 November 2001, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 17 (g), "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments: appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit".

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.